

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2023KK001

Name of Service: Tiddlywinks Too

Address of Service: 1 Fr Walsh Close, Cootes Lane, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny

Eircode: R95 C670

Name of Registered Provider: Michelle Woodgate

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection: 22/10/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	9
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate,
Tusla Child & Family Agency,
Athy Road,
Carlow.

Inspection undertaken by: Norma Thornton

Title: Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable Not applicable.

Description of service

Tiddlywinks Too is a registered full day childcare service that provides sessional and part-time preschool services and a school aged service in the evenings. The pre-school services are provided for children aged 2 to 6 years. The sessional Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) service operates between the hours of 09:00 to 12:00 and the part-time pre-school service is available from 08:00 to 13:00 hours, Monday to Friday.

The service operates from a terraced bungalow comprised of two classrooms, an office, a kitchen and had an outdoor play area in the back yard.

Staffing

There are five staff members employed in the pre-school service including the registered provider. An additional two staff members are employed for the school age service in the evenings. All staff members who as part of their role in the service is to work directly with the pre-school children hold qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 28.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included both classrooms in the service.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The deputy designated person in charge was onsite on the inspector's arrival at the service. The registered provider was unavailable on inspection day.

(b) The staff roster that was provided to the inspector demonstrated that there was always either the registered provider, designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge onsite while the service was in operation.

(c) A clearly documented outline of the management of the structure in the service was displayed in the entrance hall of the service, identifying the lines of authority, accountability, the roles, and responsibilities of individual staff members in the service.

(2) Staff files for five pre-school staff members and two school age staff were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each staff member, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file, for each staff member employed in the service including the registered provider. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) A police vetting disclosure certificate was on file for one staff member employed in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualifications were available for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) There was a staff member working directly with and caring for 8 children aged 4 to 5 years in the senior classroom and 2 staff members directly caring for 12 children aged 2 years and 8 months to 4 years in the junior classroom. The designated person in charge was also onsite to assist in either room when required and to relieve staff for breaks.

In the afternoon at 12:30 hours 9 children aged 3 to 5 years remained in the service for the part-time service with 2 staff members and the designated person in charge present.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b) The two classrooms provided a physical environment that was inviting and interesting for the children in attendance, encouraging the children to explore and engage with the interest areas and activities available.

Both classrooms provided appropriate aged interest areas which included tabletop activities, reset and reading areas, home corners and construction areas.

On the day of inspection both classrooms had been planned with inviting sensory tables containing "Halloween mess" activities to celebrate Halloween. Children and staff were observed creating "Witches' potions" with food colours, water, pipettes, conical cylinders and sensory materials such as coloured foil cat and bat confetti.

A large plastic tray of orange set jelly contained plastic spiders, bugs, skeleton bones and brightly coloured Halloween themed confetti that encouraged the children to explore and which they enjoyed the sensory aspects of.

Children also had opportunities to hand carved pumpkins with the staff supervising and supporting carefully and had opportunities to play with the pumpkin pulp. Another sensory station included a tray of lentils containing small spider and mouse figurines.

Children were observed to be happy and excited, taking turns touching and playing with the different textures, transferring water, lentils and jelly, supporting and encouraging a few nervous friends to try touching the various materials

Children who were nervous of putting their hands in the jelly or pulp expressed excitement at achieving the challenge of trying something new and different.

The children were observed to be familiar and confident in their environment demonstrating close bonds with the staff present and expressed pride in the work and activities that they were all participating in with each other.

Opportunities for children to avail of the outdoor play area were presented by the staff throughout the inspection with some children deciding to go outside to run around or to take a break and sit and chat in the outdoor kitchen/home corner under the covered pagoda.

On the glass panels either side of the entrance doors to both classrooms, maps of the children’s families’ countries of origins were displayed with the country’s national flag displayed adjacent to each country so children could learn about each other’s family’s country of origin and traditions.

Through discussion with the staff in the service the inspector was informed that a child attending the service had developed a keen interest in the registered provider’s “Chinese Reeves Turtle” who had come for a visit to the service. The staff observed that the child when engaged in activities surrounding the “Todd” the turtle, the child became relaxed and was observed to be very calm and happy. As part of this child’s personal plan the staff arranged for a photograph of the turtle to be made into a jigsaw so the child could play with it at any stage the child wanted some personal space or to take time out. Staff also ensured the child had opportunities to hold the turtle and feed it on occasion.

Staff explained to the inspector that each child had a personal plan developed in collaboration with their parents/guardians in relation to their interests and learning goals. Parents were communicated to via a media application with daily information provided to parents regarding their child’s day in the service, such as their basic care needs, personal well-being, food and nutrition and learning activities experienced. Photographs of individual children’s learning experiences were shared with the child’s parents/guardians.

The staff informed the inspector of the information contained in the Tiddlywinks Partnership with Parents policy which insured that parents’ active participation in the planning and development of the service specific to their child was promoted. This was evidenced by children’s individual learning journals reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection and the communication and positive interactions observed between staff and parents at drop-off and collection times.

Throughout the inspection staff were observed to be very in tune with the individual children in their care, familiar with each child’s personality and their abilities, while also being encouraging and supportive in each child’s learning and development. At collection time each child could be overheard proudly telling their parent/ grandparent/ guardian of something they achieved or a new experience they enjoyed during their time in the service that day.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

The service was secured with a coded keypad system, only known to staff employed in the service. A call bell system alerted staff to parents or any other visitors calling to the service. A clear transparent window in the main door allowed staff to see any persons at the main entrance prior to access to the service being authorised by staff. The perimeter of the outdoor play area at the back of the building was secured by a ten-foot-high cement block wall. This assisted in preventing any unauthorised person from entering the service and to mitigate against a child exiting the service unsupervised.

Cleaning equipment, cleaning materials or cleaning solutions were not observed in the classrooms. A designated safe storage area ensured that all cleaning agents were kept safely away and inaccessible to the children attending the service.

Infection Control:

There was a toilet area located between both classrooms which provided an adequate number of child sized toilets for the number of children registered to attend the service. A long wall mounted steel hand wash basin at child height, provided several sets of taps for the children to easily access and wash their hands.

Liquid hand soap and paper towelling was provided, which the children could easily access and use. The older children were observed to use the toilets and hand washing facilities independently, while staff supported and assisted the younger children as needed.

Children were observed to spontaneously wash their hands after outdoor and messy play which took place throughout the inspection demonstrating that they were familiar with when and how to wash their hands.

Administration of Medication:

Staff were well informed of their responsibilities and procedures for safe administration of any medication to children in the service. Staff assured the inspector and demonstrated that child centred care plans were on record and available to staff for any child prescribed with specialised medication for diagnosed medical conditions. Staff were also reassuring in the knowledge they demonstrated regarding administration of anti-febrile medication to children with high temperatures in accordance with the service's administration of medication policy.

Outing:

An outings policy was available in the service, in the event of any outings away from the service, which all staff were well informed of.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) On review of records maintained and in discussion with the staff and designated person in charge, the inspector was reassured that each child attending the service has their time of arrival to the service and departure time from the service recorded daily.

(3)(a) Staff ensured that no person other than a pre-school child, person dropping or collecting a child, an employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises unauthorised.

(b) A daily record of any visitors to the service was maintained and the inspector was requested to ensure that they recorded the details of their inspection visit.

(4) The designated person in charge demonstrated that the records were retained for a period of at least one year.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) There were five staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. At all times while the service was operating, the roster demonstrated that a staff member with FAR training was onsite.

(2)(a)(b) A dedicated first aid box was available on an accessible shelf for staff to access at reception. Records demonstrated that its contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1) The following records were maintained.

(a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 12 September 2025.

(b) The registered provider maintained a record of the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The last maintenance check for the fire-fighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in January 2025 and for the smoke alarm system was recorded as having taken place on 30 July 2025.

(2) The fire safety records were available and open for inspection by the early years inspector or by a parent / employee on request.

(3) The inspector observed that records were maintained since the service opened in 2023.

(4) A fire procedure notice was clearly displayed in the main entrance hall, clearly outlining the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire, with a clearly signposted assembly area identified in the carpark at the front of the building.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

A current insurance certificate for the service was displayed on a notice board in the entrance hall. The insurance certificate detailed insurance cover for a full day care service provision for a maximum of 33 early years children and covered the period from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.